



NEWS RELEASE

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NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE
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USDA Launches First-Ever Local Foods Survey

NASHVILLE, TN – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced in April the 2015 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey as part of its continued support of local and regional food systems. USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) is conducting this first-time survey to produce official benchmark data on the local food sector in the United States.

"Our citizens want to know where their food comes from, and our producers and farmers want to connect with those citizens," Tennessee Agriculture Commissioner Jai Templeton said. "That's why it's so important to have current market data and production information. That baseline knowledge is critical when guiding state efforts to promote sales of local Tennessee products."

The Local Food Marketing Practices Survey will ask producers for information on their production and local marketing of foods during the 2015 calendar year. Information includes the value of food sales by marketing channel (i.e. farmers markets, community supported agriculture (CSA) arrangements, restaurants, and roadside stands), value of crop and livestock sales, marketing practices, expenses, and more.

NASS mailed a second round of the Local Foods Marketing Practices Survey today to a random sample of producers who grow and sell foods locally. Response to the survey is vital as the information gathered will be used to account for all farmers involved in the local and regional food system. Producers who receive the 2015 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey from NASS are strongly encouraged to respond. Farmers can fill out the survey online via a secure website, www.agcounts.usda.gov, or return their form by mail.

"In the 2012 Census of Agriculture, more than 3,600 farms in Tennessee reported selling directly to consumers," said David Knopf, director for NASS's Eastern Mountain Regional Field Office, which serves Tennessee. "Consumers spent nearly \$20 million here on fresh fruits, vegetables, and meats. Current trends show people making more of an effort to buy local, and we wouldn't be surprised to see higher numbers in this survey."

Farmers markets, one of many ways farmers sell their products directly to consumers, are a Tennessee tradition. The 2012 numbers break down to each of the 3,600+ farms

earning just over \$5,200 from local food sales alone, up more than \$1,000 from the previous census numbers.

USDA stakeholders, including farmers, various levels of government, and related businesses and organizations, will all benefit from the new information, which will be published in December 2016. The data will be used for decisions and programs that support local and regional food systems, including:

- USDA Agricultural Marketing Service's Farmers Market Promotion Program, Local Food Promotion Program, Specialty Crop Block Grants Program.
- USDA Farm Service Agency's Microloan Program.
- USDA Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentives Program, a collaboration between USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture and USDA's Food and Nutrition Service
- USDA Food and Nutrition Service's efforts to expand EBT availability at farmers markets
- State and local agencies' support and promotion of local food markets
- Farmers' and ag organizations' business and marketing strategies
- Researchers', extension's and university members' local foods research

For more information about the 2015 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey, visit www.agcensus.usda.gov.

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